

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A liftgate frame for a liftgate of a motor vehicle, said frame assembly comprising:

an upper frame member having an inner header panel fixedly secured to an outer header panel and adapted to be pivotally secured to the motor vehicle; ~~and~~

a generally U-shaped, integrally formed lower frame member fixedly secured to said upper frame member, said lower frame member including spaced apart, ~~downwardly extending~~ vertical segments and a horizontal segment extending between said vertical segments for supporting the liftgate as the liftgate opens and closes; and

a reinforcement member having a first portion fixedly secured to said inner header panel and said outer header panel, said reinforcement member having a second portion fixedly secured to one of said vertical segments for reinforcing the attachment between said upper and lower frame members.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently amended) A liftgate frame as set forth in claim 2 1 wherein said lower frame member is formed by tubular hydroforming of a metal material.

4. (Cancelled)

5. (New) The liftgate frame of claim 1 further including a tailgate hinge coupled to said horizontal segment of said lower frame member.

6. (New) The liftgate frame of claim 5 further including a window hinge coupled to said liftgate frame.

7. (New) The liftgate frame of claim 6 wherein said tailgate hinge and said window hinge are adapted to allow a window and a tailgate to rotate about parallel axes.

8. (New) The liftgate frame of claim 5 further including a frame latch fixed to said horizontal segment of said lower frame member.

9. (New) The liftgate frame of claim 1 wherein said first portion of said reinforcement member extends substantially perpendicularly from said second portion.

10. (New) The liftgate frame of claim 9 wherein said reinforcement member includes a substantially "L"-shaped cross-section.

11. (New) The liftgate frame of claim 1 wherein said lower frame is tubular, said second portion of said reinforcement member being at least partially positioned within said tubular lower frame.

12. (New) The liftgate frame of claim 1 wherein said lower frame is tubular, said liftgate frame further including wiring extending through said tubular lower frame.

13. (New) A liftgate frame for a motor vehicle liftgate having a window and a tailgate moveable relative to the liftgate frame between open and closed positions, the liftgate frame comprising:

an upper frame member adapted to be pivotally coupled to the motor vehicle;

a substantially U-shaped tubular lower frame member fixed to said upper frame member forming an uninterrupted ring surrounding an opening;

a window hinge coupled to said liftgate frame and adapted to rotatably couple the window to the liftgate frame;

a tailgate hinge coupled to said liftgate frame and adapted to rotatably couple the tailgate to the liftgate frame, wherein said opening is adapted to be unobstructed when said window and said tailgate are each in the open position.

14. (New) The liftgate frame of claim 13 wherein said upper frame member includes spaced apart vertically extending end segments forming a portion of said ring.

15. (New) The liftgate frame of claim 14 wherein said upper frame member includes an inner header panel fixed to an outer header panel.

16. (New) The liftgate frame of claim 15 further including a reinforcement member having a first portion fixedly secured to said inner header panel and said outer header panel, said reinforcement member having a second portion fixedly secured to said lower frame member for reinforcing the attachment between said upper and lower frame members.

17. (New) The liftgate frame of claim 16 wherein said lower frame is tubular, said second portion of said reinforcement member being at least partially positioned within said tubular lower frame.

18. (New) The liftgate frame of claim 17 wherein said first portion of said reinforcement member extends substantially perpendicularly from said second portion.

19. (New) The liftgate frame of claim 13 further including an electronic module coupled to said liftgate and adapted to output a signal indicative of the position of said liftgate frame, said window and said tailgate.

20. (New) The liftgate frame of claim 13 further including wiring extending through said tubular lower frame.